

How to look after your... Summer Bedding Plants

Part of the Pacific Nurseries
'How to...' series

We have been growing bedding plants for over 40 years and are proud to offer the freshest home grown plants ready for your gardens and enjoyment. Starting in early March the polytunnels begin to fill up with tiny plants and we give them the best conditions to produce strong plants. We do not force our plants with excessive heat as we want to ensure that the plants which you buy will withstand the vagrancies of the British climate when they are planted out in early May.

Planting: Compost has changed and we are now living in the world without peat (nearly). Westland Multipurpose with added John Innes is now peat free and Westland Jacks Magic had just 40% peat content. Both of these are ideal for growing your bedding plants in but will require different fertilising and watering regimes than you may have used before. The purpose of using compost is to provide the best environment for the young roots of new plants so they can extract the nutrients which they require and to hold moisture for the plants to grow. When planting add some MiracleGro All purpose Continuous Release plant food

Watering: Peat free compost does not have the ability to act like a sponge for holding water and it dries out much more quickly than compost of yesteryear. More water will be required and this therefore means that available nutrients are "washed" through the compost more readily leaving less for the roots to absorb. The use of Westland Boost will help to retain moisture and help to feed the plants too and we thoroughly recommend this product alongside your chosen fertiliser whether this be MiracleGro or Tomorite.

Never let a plant dry out as this will destroy the tiny hairs on the roots of the plant which will kill the plant. Some say water in the evenings so that water can be absorbed into the compost when the temperatures are cooler and this can be good practice. Try not to leave the foliage wet overnight as this can promote leaf diseases, perhaps consider watering in the cool of the early mornings instead.

Hanging baskets are notorious for drying out in the wind, consider taking them down from their hooks in windy weather and sitting them in a tray of water to help them to rehydrate. The use of Water retaining gel crystals in hanging baskets is a worthwhile exercise and gives greater tolerance to drying out.

You will need:



Multi-purpose with added
John Innes

Water retaining gel



Westland's BOOST

MiracleGro Continuous Release

MiracleGro All Purpose Liquid Feed

Tomorite



Bug Clear

Slug Killer Pellets

Slug Copper Tape

Slug Barrier Pellets

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The team at Pacific Nurseries is highly experienced. As plant growers and the supplier of thousands of plants to over 100 garden centres in the region, we are well placed to advise you on any of your gardening questions. Please ask us for any help you need.

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Feeding: Feeding your plants regularly will give huge rewards to the success of your planting. Just like us, plants thrive on food! After having added Miracle-grow Continuous Release Plant Food when planting, your plant displays will need regular top ups of feed. It is difficult to be accurate with advice because it depends on the size of the pot, the position in the garden whether in full sun or shade and it depends too on the variety of plant. A little too much food is almost certainly better than not enough. Let's use a guide of adding feed once a week to the watering programme as a start and then you will increase or decrease as you experiment.

Deadheading: Why do we need to remove the fading flowers? The fading flowers will, in most cases, make seed heads and thus the plant is using all of its energy in producing seed to ensure it's long term survival. The removal of the faded flowers will encourage the plant to try to reproduce again and thus repeat flowering will continue provided the older flowers are removed. If seed pods have been produced then remove these too and any long trailing side shoots can be nipped back to keep neat compact and vigorous plants. These fast growing annuals are pretty tough and it is unlikely that you will do lasting damage by being over zealous with the deadheading. Remember to give them a feed after dead heading too.

Aftercare: Slugs – the bane of gardeners lives when planting out soft young bedding plants. If your garden really struggles with an over population of slugs then use some Slug Pellets, please remember to follow the manufacturers instructions, the ground doesn't need to be painted blue with them! Other barriers to slugs are available, copper tape around pots can help or barrier pellets.

Greenfly – are always present in the summer months but only the strongest attacks need to be dealt with. We recommend Bug Clear as the best control. The larvae can be very tiny so keep a regular check for these insects.

Diseases – thankfully there are few diseases which affect bedding plants when in the garden. Powdery mildew is often seen as a result of a plant becoming stressed by too much or too little water and is difficult to treat. Please ask one of our assistants if you need further help .



Remember to water every day, even when it has been raining.

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